

HARVEST CUSTOMS

IN

NORTHUMBERLAND,

BY JAMES HARDY.

September, welcome! month of genial mood,
 To hearts that crush'd in life's tumultuous press,
 Pant for the rural paths of peacefulness,
 On which the world's cold gaze may not intrude.
 The calm that wraps the earth, and sky, and sea,
 Permits the mind its own dear fancies bright;
 And, as in lone seclusion of the night,
 The past revives and glads our privacy.
 What jovial train breaks on us as we muse?
 The reaper bands 'mid fields of bending grain,
 Where mirth's loud shout, sly joke, and winning strain,
 The light of joy, through deep stirr'd hearts diffuse.
 Blest scenes of youth! and happy harvest hours!
 Life has no equal charms—no bliss like yours.—*MS.*

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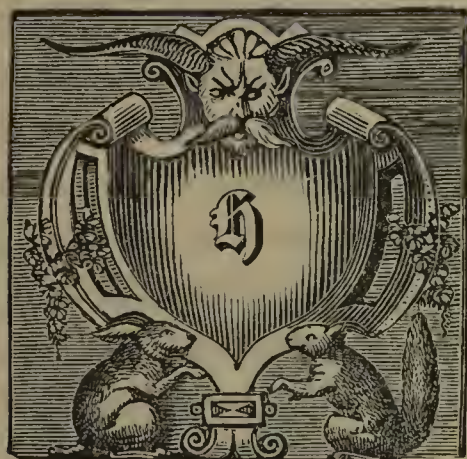
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ARVEST, it has often been remarked, is the most genial and refreshing period of the seasons' round. Then or never is the happiness of the lowly born complete. The deep serenity of the autumnal sky, and the unruffled quiet of the ripening fields, are reflected in the peasant's bosom, and it gushes over with the combined emotions of cheerfulness and gratitude. And yet at no

other conjuncture of the year, is more strenuous activity demanded—or the call to labour more steadfastly urgent. It may be that then the triple bond of social union, more intensely and intimately encircled around his heart, speeding the vital current with an accelerated impulse—braces every sinew of his frame, and nerves every muscle for exertion. At other times his hours were solitary, his toils separate—in the remote solitude of the speechless field—speechless to him—with no kind voice to encourage or to cheer*—or if it be his partner, engrossed at home in a load of family and “earth-born cares,” that erode and canker the blindest disposition, and fetter the buoyant expressions of glee. Now those foreboding clouds have dissipated,

* “Eating a cold dinner by a dyke side,” is a well known expression of the solitary discomfort of rural labourers whose occupations take them to a distance from home.

and the sun of felicity shoots free and far, its illuminating radiance. The disconsolate mourner looks forth through her tears, and is comforted—and the cheek furrowed and wan, is smoothed and mellowed. Mirth girds on his buskins, “seizes his beechen spear,” and sallies forth to disport, amid the smiles of a rejoicing world.

Harvest is a season of care-defying rites, and fondly cherished, deeply rooted observances—results of the many, divided, far descending streams of hilarity, poured into one impetuous, uncontrolled, head-strong tide.

Every traveller or sportsman, must at some time, whilst casually passing a band of reapers, have observed one detach herself from the rest, and wend with hastening footsteps to intercept his way, in whom as she approaches his scrutiny, he will discern a grey veteran crone, dressed in the long outward robe of her Saxon ancestry—who versed in smooth words and plausible inducements, and bending with humble lowliness, will with outstretched, sun-embrowned rustic, supplicate a “largesse,” from the “liberal hand and open heart.” To the novice, unwitting of such well-urged demands, inquiring the destination of his hesitatingly produced coin—the jocular reply is ale—merry, hearty, “berry-brown ale”—to invigorate the weak,—support the toil-strung—enliven the lagging—to infuse harmony through all, and procure blessings for himself. And what can exceed the heart-elating acclaim—what the “vollied shower” of jeer and scorn—that annouces their success or frustration in levying this their favourite contribution?*

The sports of that field, rough, boisterous, and rude—the pervading sympathy by which so many alien hearts are knit in one unselfish aim—the unfettered and unforced flow of converse, that like a summer’s rill, alleviates the heavy burden, and imparts a resilience to the sinking heart—the sun-break interludes of rest—so acceptable and yet so recklessly spent—the stormy *Kemp*, or emulous struggle for the honour of the ridge-end—and, so delightfully accordant, in their silvery lapses, with the wild—still aspects of nature, the far-resounding notes of some native melody, attuned by a chorus of happy voices, at the impulse of hearts yet light and green—all these with a several interest, attract us, irresistibly attract us, to that fascinating scene.

That field of labour too, during its pauses, has its smooth—tranquil spots, like the verdant and flowery expanses by the pathway that invite the weary traveller to recline and to meditate—when the carol ceases to swell, and the jest to sparkle, and the din of gossip and the deadly blast of scandal are alike hushed, while the traditionary tale, and the

* A somewhat similar custom prevails in Norfolk and Suffolk.—Hone’s *Every Day Book*, II. col. 1165. 1166,

narrative of the olden time—the dear—poetic—dim—cloud-wrapt, olden time, exert their arresting—penetrative sway, elevate the mind into the region of mystery, and lull into a transient forgetfulness of sublunary ill. Such pleasing episodes, unluckily, unless to one who familiarly mingles with the harvest band, and becomes a partaker in its toils, as well as in its conversation, are by no means to be arrived at with facility. Like some rare, uncultured wild flower, the favourite of “wandering botanist,” they bloom only in the immensity of Nature’s shaggy and outlandish retreats—difficult to be discerned, readily overlooked. The example here presented, far removed from the type of its class—commemorative of the baleful effects of the dreariest superstition that stains the page of history—and as to which a thick shadow still rests on the peasant’s mind—is adduced not for its innate pretensions—but as being an attainable specimen.

A female on the harvest-ridge, once having the misfortune to break her sickle, was obliged to proceed home, for another. As she went hastening along, a hare hirpled across the path before her, and then turned round to gaze, seated on its haunches, and welking its long, soft ears to and fro. The hunting appetite is irresistible—she hurled her broken sickle at the hare, and it sprang suddenly across the field, as if a pack of harriers were on its trail. At her return, as she drew near to the same spot, she was much surprised at viewing the form of what seemed the same hare, stealing athwart her way, and assuming its former scrutinizing posture. Bent this time, not to permit the opportunity of a savoury supper to escape, she took a steadier aim than before, launched the fresh sickle, and struck the animal on the brow. But how was she horrified! when the hare, instead of betaking itself to flight, with a wild scream of vengeance, darted upon her, implanted its talons—probably turned up and whetted for the nonce—in her face—biting and scratching her like a cat! Such a fierce affray then began betwixt the two—woman and hare—that there is no knowing to what extremities the matter might have proceeded—had not two labourers mowing in the vicinity, alarmed by the woman’s outcries, hastened to her rescue—when on their attempting to lay hold on the enraged creature—it slipped through their hands, and was speedily beyond all human hopes. This singular audacity in a hare, excited wondrous speculation in the community, who all philosophers after a fashion of their own, forthwith set on foot an investigation, as to the causes of such unaccountable procedure. Nor was it long ere it was ascertained, that a solitary, friendless female, deeply struck with the decrepitude and paralysis of age, from that very period bore upon her hitherto unsullied front, an ugly seamed gash, as if occasioned by a sharp instrument. It also appeared that this dame

though heretofore particularly intimate with the individual whom the strange accident had befallen—from that time forward, could not abide her—diligently avoiding her presence. The mystery was disclosed at once! That hitherto demure and inscrutable female, was all that fancy could conceive of wickedness in a human being; one who to accomplish the works of malignity and darkness, towards which her own bad will had inclined, but which nature denied the power and vigour to execute, had framed a detestable compact with the king of evil, at the price of both body and soul! Irritated by the odious imputation, the wrinkled matron, who though long dreaded and viewed askance, yet had always preserved the externals of decency and personal respect,—grew desperate—broke out into awful excesses—cursed and “blasphemeand”—vowed vengeance immitigable—renounced the friendship of all her former associates—wreaked her fury on milk, butter-churns, and dwining babies—fell foul of the farmer’s stock, and shook his corn—in short committed all the untoward disasters within the circuit of her neighbours’ limited geographical range. She “gave herself furth to have knowledge to do evill, and quhair ever scho promisit to do evill—evill befell.” What was her fate, is not declared; whether consigned to the flaming tar-barrel—the customary judicial resource in such obstinate cases—or rather, bending beneath the heavy and accumulating ills of age, she fell a victim to the dislike and cruelty of her ignorant and misguided fellow creatures—“wereit of the warldis fascheries; and brought to sic miserie,” as made her “willing to die!”*

Marvellous relations too are rife, of children, brought to the field by mothers, who had not the means of their being tended at home, and left cradled at the foot of the ridge, till the “landing” had been concluded, undergoing changes, the most remarkable and perplexing. Eager, and foremost of the straggling company, on their way to a new portion of their labours, hurries some doting mother towards her slumbering offspring, and the coverlet being withdrawn, what instead of her own sweet cherub “celestial rosy-red,” meets her appalled vision, but a “greet” hideous lump of ugliness, staring awake, and grinning a smile of malicious welcome to the devoted foster parent, whom it has already formed the design of draining to a shadow! This was the work of the Fairies, that they might replace one of their own lubberly, woe-begone, valueless bantlings with some exquisite “mortal mixture of earth’s mould;” and often too as the swain well knows, and takes particular pains to impress on the rising generation

* Trial of Elspeth Cursetter or Colsetter, 29 May, 1629. *apud* Dalrymple’s *Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, p. 44.

when gleaning behind the reapers, on the summit of the “stooks,” nestling among the crowded ears, are fixed tempting morsels of “fairy butter”—“lickerish baits” to lure young—unguarded lips, and intemperate appetites astray.

“The scene is changed.” The riant flow of that joyous course of existence is now almost sped, and that firmly wedged compact fast advances to its dissolution. Amidst a country, dotted with rows of shock and “gait,” and an increasing frequency of yellow solitudes stripped of their golden honours, we now behold them forming their darkened ranks along the edge of the last field of grain, destined to fall beneath the reaper’s blade. Glad was the prelusive morn, that with the promise of bright days, ushered in scattered knots, that harvest company a-field—and as in some rapturous pastime of their childhood, in the fresh novelty of their toils, did the first glib clips of the fine-edged sickle, driven by a sinewy and eager arm, sweep “burdened with ears,” swollen handfuls from the ridge; but gladder still “and Oh! with what deeper welcome!” the propitious day-break that heralds that labour’s close. Not content alone with the healing prospects it discloses, music must instil a relish intenser still, and to strenuous efforts, impart speedier wings. Some village Orpheus, nodding ecstatic over squeaking fiddle or wind-blown bagpipe, upon that day attains “the height of his high argument,” while he beholds the country’s hope and glory, moving to his volant touch. They “raised to height of noblest temper,” prosecute “in perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood,” their modulated toil. High upborne on lengthened pole, like to a Roman maniple, their showy standard guides the fervid way. This is the *corn-baby* or *kirn-dolly*, an image formed from a quantity of corn, selected from the field last to be cut down, and prepared some time previous to the day of harvest home. Its size is that of a full grown female. The spikes of grain being arranged in a bunch, are firmly compressed and tied where they unite with the stalks, to form the head and neck. Upon its head is placed a muslin cap, such as country maidens delight to exhibit themselves in on holiday occasions, and a white muslin smock, trimmed with ribbons and top-knots enow, being fitted over the straw, it at length assumes an infinitely more gracious semblance to humanity, than does an Otaheitan divinity. The longest fork shaft procurable, being thrust up through it, ensures a desired facility of transport from landing to landing, or if business press—for its being stationed statue-like at the head of the field, the reaper’s “star of Arcady”—their “Tyrian Cynosure.”

Anxious to arrive at a conclusion, in seasonable time, that is before the sun go down, the mid-day’s interval of rest, or it may be on occa-

sions of riot and ludicrous uproar, is cheerfully abridged, and with more prompt and earnest endeavours is the willing work resumed.

Great is the strife that now ensues in that erst peaceful and regular array; as the sensibly diminished corn-ridges, assailed on every side are hurried to the sheaf, and the eye can already calculate the amount of strokes that will lay them low. The old people of either sex, erewhile most sedulous in bearing the heavy burden, now that another season's battle has been fought so toughly and well, suspend their sickles—idle now. Fled for aye the light-winged hours, when they with youth on their side, were competitors in that hot melee. “Another race has followed,” and “the palm” is destined to fresher and less furrowed brows. Theirs however is a gaiety of heart that age, and care, and labour may impair, but cannot suppress, and while the youngsters struggle on,—excited perchance by an exhilarating glass, which she of the party who has seen most harvests has been dispatched to procure, and caught by the enchanting lure of the wild musician, they join hands in many a merry reel, round stook and sheaf. The object of the now all-engrossing contention is, to obtain the last cut of corn, reaped on the field. Hands are wounded, and wrists twitched, that have weathered many a brunt, but still, in heedless and savage fury, they flounder on, until the aspired for handful, falls, generally by the collusion of a friendly *bandster*, who has managed to conceal it, beneath an unbound sheaf, or in the middle of a “stook,” to the lot of the fairest and the favourite of the field. Not however without the murmurs of the envious is the contest resigned, for great is the privilege that last cut confers, as being chiefest offering dedicate to the sacred rites of Hymen. Smiled on by the god—heading the nuptial train, will she with elastic footstep, enter within the precincts of the sacred fane, while over the “Bridge of Sighs,” the relentless portcullis for ever excludes hope.

The last business, before leaving the field, is “to shout the kirk.” This consists in the rapturous outburst of the congregated multitude, in one united and long prolonged acclaim. In some localities, the shout is preceded by a rhyme apposite to the occasion, recited by the clearest voiced individual of the company. The following specimen of it, has often awakened the echoes on the green banks of the Wansbeck.

“Blessed be the day our Saviour was born;
For Master’s corn’s all well shorn,
And we will have a good supper to night,
And a drinking of ale, and a kirk! a kirk! ahoe!”

All uniting at the close in a simultaneous shout. Those ungenerous

individuals who refuse to participate the general joy, by joining in the huzza, have their ears properly “cobbed,” that is sensibly lengthened, by means of a not very smooth process. In the fertile flats of Glendale, a somewhat abbreviated version of the harvest rhyme, is in use.

“The master’s corn is ripe—and shorn,
We bless the day that he was born,
Shouting a kirn! a kirn! ahoe!”*

The labourers on adjoining farms, if within hearing often take up the jovial shout of jubilee, and speed to more remote districts the tidings of good news.

The procession home is now marshalled. The musician, with many a flying favour, strides in front. Then comes the corn-baby on its pole; with the heroine of the day, bearing over her arm, neatly plaited, the talisman of her fortunes. Behind, troop the obstreperous multitude. On arriving at home, the thrilling shout is again raised, the last cut is consigned to the hands of the master, and the fiddler choosing his station, a country-dance is struck up on the sward before the door of the “*Ha*,” in which in presence of master and mistress, as if anticipating the evenings revels, both lad and lass bounce lustily, “with no lead on their heels.” To prepare for that happy festival, the central point, for many a day, of the hopes, the wishes, and the conversation of that harvest band, they now disperse to their several abodes.

The festivities of the Kirn “hymned by loftier harps,”—its lengthened preliminary preparations—the Kirn gifts of new caps conferred by the mistress on her deserving damsels—the display of rustic finery in comb and “gumflower,” rosette and robe of motely pattern—the flow of feast and song—the long memorial recapitulation of the best things of the season—its songs, its stories, and its more exciting scenes—the merit of fiddle-de-dee and his exhaustless store of tune, the “life and mettle” of the dancers—and the character of the dances—that dance of dances—the *cushion dance*, not excepted—the various phenomena of over-prolonged suction—the breaking up—and last scene of all “the setting home”—all these as familiar, but unfortunately less and less frequently recurring observances of an age, more generous in its usages, than that which has succeeded it, I purposely omit. It may not however be out of place to mention the

* The Harvest Home call of the Durham reapers is given in Hone’s Table Book, ii col. 505.

“Blest be the day that Christ was born,
We’ve gotten inell of Mr ———’s corn,
Well won, and better shorn.
Hip, hip, hip!—huzza! huzza! huzza!”

fate of the *corn-baby*, so gaily busked, and acting such a prominent part in the earlier proceedings of the day. During the evening it occupies the chief and most conspicuous place in the “ha,” constantly reminding them, (and there have been occasions much to be regretted, in which some have been so unmannerly as to forget*), of the auspicious event they have met to celebrate; unless when in the deepest enthusiasm of the dance, it is snatched down, and born in triumph through its eddies. One of the dishes may also be alluded to, as being supposed to have given origin to the usual name of the harvest feast—the *Kirn*—although the idea of such a dish may have merely arisen from a fanciful play upon words, while the real meaning of the term, implies somewhat more recondite and esoteric. When the company have been satisfied to repletion with the substantial fare that loads the hospitable board, there are brought forward sundry dishes of cream, taken out of the churn, just as it was going to break into butter. This, well seasoned with sugar, soon disappears under a pell-mell of spoons; as many persons eating from a dish, as, without stretching too long an arm, can conveniently reach it.

The reapers are sometimes permitted to bring with them such of their acquaintances, as from their ready accomplishments in pleasantries, will contribute to the evening’s entertainments. Lasses have their lovers premonished; and if the *kirn* is noted, it attracts, unbidden, the choice merit of the district. A particular aim with many of those strangers, is, to appear in such a disguise, as shall effectually prevent their being recognized. The fantastic mummary of the Christmas season is resorted to, and the harvest feast is often converted into a rude masquerade. Some dress themselves in female attire, others are encased, from head to heel, in straw ropes wound spirally round the body and limbs. Others again have recourse to some animal’s skin, to mask the face, and like the Hottentot *kaross*, enwrap the body; while behind, very ludicrous in the dance, depends an ox’s bushy tail. Secured, beneath these “guisings,” from every embarrassment, the emboldened rustic, with much gallantry, gives a round

* Whitley was long famous for its *kirns*, but *kirns* like many other good things are liable to much abuse—the resort to them became so promiscuous and numerous—and parties in several instances acted with such indiscretion, that there was a necessity for their being discontinued. In the north of Northumberland, the donation of a shilling to each reaper, at the conclusion of the harvest, is now frequently substituted for a *kirn*. With this, on an appointed night, the men treat themselves to liquor, music and dancing—and the good wives and “greener damsels,” to dispense their charity in a gentle way, convene in the house of some needy but worthy widow, who, out of their *kirn* money, entertains them, with cake, and gossip, and the cup “which cheers but not inebriates;” receiving in recompence of her pains, the generous remains of a plenteous feast.

of dancing to all the females in the room, and while thus engaged, performs such capers "wildly graceful," and such dexterous feats of buffoonery, as draw forth the unqualified admiration of the assembly. He who eclipses the rest, is entitled as his due, to a proportionate share of esteem, as being the "best guisard." Some preserve their incognito to the close, and depart without affording any token by which conjecture might be gratified. Others having performed their part, divest themselves of their disguise, and return to join some fair friends, who, during the previous farce, had been selected as their partners for the evening.

On these occasions also there are pranks, far less praiseworthy, at the expense of the ideal terrors of others. Not unfrequently, a company on their return home from the feast, will be waylaid by some of their companions for the purpose of giving them a fright. At one of the country kirns, as runs the story, a youth had planned a scheme for thus amusing himself. Wrapping himself in a white sheet, he stationed himself besides a gateway, which he knew some of the kirk people had to pass. The spot had long in vulgar belief, inherited the reputation of being ghost-haunted. Here with desperate boldness he posted himself, when suddenly the real ghost rose up out of the earth before him, on the opposite side of the gateway, in shape and costume so resembling himself, that to his confused perception, it seemed the selfsame being! Terrified to the utmost, he attempted to spring to his feet and run away, but the shadowy figure, significantly nodding its head, said to him in slow, solemn tone of authority.

"You come to scare, I come to scare,
While I sit here—sit you there."

Overpowered with amazement, the poor rustic swooned away, in which state, cold and deathlike, though not ultimately irrecoverable, he was found by his friends on their arrival.*

* On the authority of Robert Bolam's Notes. This resembles an encounter with the renowned "Meg of Meldon," as garrulous tradition has preserved the incidents. An individual, well known for his scepticism in regard to ghosts, had often heard of Meg's achievements in frightening people, but would not credit them. He however had no scruple in perpetuating the belief amongst a credulous community, so, one mirk night, dressed in a white drapery, he placed himself on the parapet wall of Meldon bridge—a favourite haunt of that unquiet spirit—and there sat awaiting strangers. He had not stayed long, till he found Meg herself seated beside him. "You've come to fley,"* said she, "and I've come to fley, let's both fley together." At the same time she drew herself a little nearer him, while he jealous of too familiar an intimacy, moved still further along. Meg repeated her movement, and he still shrunk from her approach. She at

* Frighten.

An ovation—humbler and less ostentatious—but to some minds, to whom the thrift and cheerful resources of poverty afford a contemplation at all times delightful—fully more interesting—still remains—the Gleaner's kirn. “The last blythe shout hath died upon our ears,” and the events of the kirn-night, common by repetition, have ceased to interest, or even to be matter of talk. Then out in the bared fields, day after day, when the sun has absorbed the dew, and the rains of the latter season delay their arrival, the assembling families of the farm-stead and the cotter's row, young and old, like the coveys of upland game, frequent the harvest field, to pick up the scanty relics, the farmer has abandoned to their use, and that of the fowls of heaven. The accumulated proceeds, plaited up in handfuls called *singles*, are at mid-day or evening, borne home—where being sufficiently dried, the grain is beaten out with a mallet, and afterwards separated from the chaff by being allowed to fall from a *wecht*, in the stream of a current of air. The produce, where the busy hands are numerous and diligent, often considerably augments the frugal hind's boll, subject to many a call. At the end of the “gathering season,” in reward of the assiduity of her little ones, the mother prepares for them, their delicious banquet. That day, the “kirn” is put in motion—and the cream brought exactly to the mingling of acidity with sweetness. Then sugar dropped in, in unsparing spoonfuls, raises the mixture to its highest zest. Meanwhile upon the fire, a rich cake of the white flour of the gathering, with sugary baits and persuasives throughout, is in rapid preparation. These unwonted delicacies, the supreme of youthful conception, more than repay the poor little things, for all the pinching ills they have endured, in many a raw—cheerless day of expiring autumn.

Meantime under the influence of propitious suns, and dry evaporating breezes, the remaining enclosures are speedily cleared of their treasures—a period not unrefreshed with effervescent flashes of jovialty—at least among the junior portion of the rural community. The genial current that diffused cheerfulness and content, amid the weighty cares of the harvest, has not so entirely shrunk its dimensions, but that still mirth and harmless pastimes, mingle along its smiling banks. And if in future years, one who at the call of his own elastic impulses has quaffed those exhilarating and sparkling waters, in looking back upon the few, how few! illuminated spots, that gild the shadowy land of memory, could have found a recording voice, methinks he might thus have raised the retrospective strain.

length came so close as to give him a push, which he hastily attempted to shun, but lost balance, and fell headlong into the water.

I.

And there was too in the long harvest eves,
 The happy toil, when the late leading wain,
 By fav'ring moonlight, housed the ready grain,
 To aid the *builder* with the forth-brought sheaves ;
 To guide the horse to *trace* the o'erladed team ;
 To drag to *forker's* hand the distant *stook* ;
 And when the car its way through moorlands took,
 To watch the wheels with glistening moss-fire gleam.*
 And there were the wild sports when work was o'er,
 At *Boglie*, by the mazy *stacks* concealed ;
 Or *Hide and seek*—or *Bases* far a-field ;
 Or greedy *Gled* that off the younglings bore.
 Can after life give back the gladdening hours,
 That 'mid those fervid Harvest games were ours !

II.

And when that youthful merriment was gone,
 And deeper feelings—nobler motives—thrill'd,
 Still were those scenes with fresh enjoyment fill'd,
 For what had vanish'd amply to atone :
 For having reached some upland's airy line,
 Beneath us stretch'd the woodland prospect fair,
 What scenes of fancy might with that compare !
 What hues so varied ! or what tints so fine !
 Not Spring when “ she comes forth with buds ” and flowers,
 Or Summer when awake her splendid things,
 On gold and purple, green and azure wings,
 To flutter 'mid her radiant sun-lit bowers ;
 Had half such fascination, could so move,
 The secret fountains of the heart's deep love.

In this deeply interesting period of the woodland's changing umbrage, when the repose of nature's energies diffuses a quietude, unperturbed and universal—as if in harmony with the inactive scenes around, is the circuit of harvest labour completed, and the anxieties of the farmer and his labourers brought finally to a close. Then is

* In passing over swampy moorlands in Autumn, the wheels of carts, or the shoes of travellers, are often seen to glimmer as if beset with thousands of luminous sparkles, or even sheets of flame. This is occasioned by breaking in upon the decayed vegetable ingredients underneath the surface, which teem with phosphorescent matter visible only in the dark, and when thus excited. I need not say that the flame is innocuous, and destitute of heating properties. This phenomenon is usually called *Wild-fire*.

the last sheaf of corn, securely circled by the stackyard wall, or lodged beneath the covert of the barn. Sometimes the celebration of the kirk is deferred till then, that both servant and master may have equal cause for rejoicing. At all events, few are so niggardly, as to grudge regaling their farm-servants, for the multiplied toils, and long moonlight yokings, they have submitted to in their work of love, with a cheering round or two of the bottle, joined to a keenly relished repast of bread and cheese, washed down with "mantling quaighs of ale." The mistress too, as chance will have it, comes in for a share of the entertainment, as should her well-fledged train of geese, now admitted to the full range of the stubbles, and advancing to their maturity at Michaelmas, come across the track of the last loaded wain, on its passage to the stackyard, the driver is not worth his whip, if he have not a "harvest guise" roasted for supper. This no one can righteously retain from him, provided he can by fair means, lay it dead with his whip handle. This is another custom now almost unpractised, which seems to have been of more frequent occurrence in the days of our forgotten ancestry. In Yorkshire, on the eve on which the corn was secured, the husbandmen partook of what was termed their "Inning-geese."* Tusser, tells the farmers to "let Goose have a goose, be she lean be she fat," and that for a reason which cannot be too deeply remembered by those immediately in contact with the outfield labourer, as it is by such small considerate favours, as much as by the tie of mutual interest, that the bond of rural society, so beautiful and patriarchal, is rendered indissolubly firm.

"Please such as did please thee, man, woman, and child,
Thus doing, with alway suche helpe as they can
Thou winnest the praise of the labouring man."*

Thus in various parts of the extensive shire of Northumberland, are some of the modes, by which the "harvest folk," contrive to "keep themselves merrie all harvest time long," and thus when the unflagging round of occupation has been conducted with prosperity and unflinching steadiness to its close, do they give loose to the last glad outburst of their exuberant hearts—thus shake "to the wind their cares."

* Brand's Popular Antiquities by Sir H. Ellis, vol. ii. p. 16. In Boys's Sandwich occurs this item "35 Hen. VIII. Spent when we ete our harvyst goose iij^s. vi^d. and the goose x^l." (Hone's Every-Day Book, ii. 1174.) The French had their "Harvest gosling" under Henry IV. (Brand, *ubi sup.*)

* Ibid, p. 17.

“ Our rural ancestors, with little blest,
 Patient of labour when the end was rest,
 Indulged the day that housed the annual grain,
 With feasts and offerings, and a thankful strain :
 The joy their *wives*, and *sons*, and *servants* share
 Ease of their toil and partners of their care :
 The laugh, the jest, attendants on the bowl,
 Smoothed ev’ry brow, and opened every soul.*

As a stranger and as a gleaner we entered the harvest field—these
 stray spikes, the sparing result of our devious search, disposed in a
 slightly connected fascicle, we dedicate to the benign genius of the
 season.

* Pope.

